

PROPOSAL

With Air Force assistance, to undertake the procurement of (a) 20 high altitude aircraft, (b) photo-reconnaissance equipment, and (c) electronic-reconnaissance equipment, and to prepare for and conduct extensive overflights of the Soviet Bloc in order to provide photographic and, secondarily, electronic intelligence. (Project AQUATONE).

SITUATION

The Lockheed Aircraft Corporation has proposed a very-high-altitude, jet-powered glider (designated CL-282). The Corporation is willing to take full responsibility for the design, mock-up, building, secret testing, and field maintenance of this unorthodox vehicle. It therefore appears entirely feasible for a CIA task force to undertake a covert overflight program based upon the CL-282, which will fly at 70,000 feet, well out of reach of present Russian interception and high enough to have a good chance of avoiding detection.

Photographic equipment can be developed which will enable extraordinary intelligence content to be obtained with pictures taken from great altitudes. A single mission in clear weather can photograph a strip of Russia 200 miles wide and 220 miles long. A spotting camera will take pictures in which the individuals in a city street can be counted from 70,000 feet. Cloud cover will reduce completeness but is not a serious obstacle because missions can be scheduled for good

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weather and alternate routes for clear weather can be selected in flight.

Analogously, it is believed that automatic electronic intercept equipment (ELINT gear) can be developed which will provide from each overflight essential intelligence data

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The opportunity for safe overflight with the best equipment that can be built at this time will last only a year or so because the Soviets will develop radar and interceptors or guided missiles effective for the 70,000-foot region. The CL-282 can be developed and produced extraordinarily rapidly because it is based on a fighter aircraft already in production and uses an engine already tested. Moreover, experience with this aircraft will contribute significantly to the ability of the United States to maintain a lead in the development of higher altitude aircraft and thus to maintain a safe overflight capacity.

(\*) OBJECTIVES

The following objectives may be attained by this means:

- a. Improve estimates of Soviet ability to deliver nuclear weapons and their capacity to produce them.
- b. Appraise Soviet guided missile development through photographs of testing ranges, etc.

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- c. Assess the Soviet order of battle as an early warning indicator.
- d. Provide adequate locations and analyses of Russian targets.
- e. Disclose new developments which might otherwise lead to technological surprise.
- f. Appraise Soviet industrial and economic progress.

COST

25X1A      The cost of procurement by this Agency under the program here proposed  
is expected to total approximately [REDACTED] broken down as follows:

20 airframes, together with maintenance and  
testing equipment for the testing  
of the first one to be delivered

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6 complete sets of photographic equipment, each  
set consisting of 3 configurations

12 sets of electronic search equipment to be  
used on photographic missions,  
together with 3 sets of automatic  
FERRET equipment

Additional field maintenance equipment

[REDACTED]

25X1A      The margin of error in these figures probably does not exceed  
[REDACTED] and it is believed highly unlikely that the total procurement

25X1A      costs could amount to more than [REDACTED] The estimates assume that  
the Air Force will furnish as a contribution to the project and without  
cost to the Agency (a) technical assistance and supervision, (b) all  
equipment regularly furnished as government furnished equipment including  
especially 40 engines, and (c) transportation of materiel and personnel  
to operational bases. The above figures contain no allowances for

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(a) administrative costs, including especially the cost of developing photo-intelligence and electronic-intelligence requirements, of mission planning, and of pilot recruitment and training, (b) the cost of actually mounting the operation, including pay and subsistence of personnel, transportation of personnel and materiel and field maintenance, and (c) the cost of processing photographic film and electronic tape.

ORGANIZATION

It is proposed that this undertaking be organized as a joint CIA/Air Force project in which CIA will undertake procurement as indicated above with the assistance of the Air Force in all phases and will conduct the overflights as a clandestine operation. Within the CIA, the Special Assistant to the Director for Planning and Coordination (SA/PC/DCI) will be in charge of the project, with Mr. Herbert Miller as Executive Officer. He will be supported by other officers temporarily assigned on a part-time or full-time basis as appropriate. Sub-projects will be organized initially as components of AQUATONE covering the performance of all the following functions:

1. Airframe procurement
2. Procurement of photo-reconnaissance equipment
3. Development and procurement of electronic equipment
4. Assembly and formulation of photo-intelligence requirements
5. Assembly and formulation of electronic-intelligence requirements
6. Pilot recruitment and training

At a later stage, other component projects will be organized as required.

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended

- a. That the project be approved as outlined above.
- b. That the Special Assistant to the Director for Planning and Coordination be designated as the official in charge of the project and as Approving Officer, subject to the guidance of the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence and the Director of Central Intelligence.
- c. That the procurement of the airframes, photo-reconnaissance equipment and electronic equipment up to the amounts indicated above be authorized, subject to the following provisions:
  - (1) Procurement and contractual arrangements will be those normally employed by the Agency, with such exemptions and restrictions designed to achieve maximum security as may be approved by the Project Officer.
  - (2) All contractual and procurement documents and arrangements will be specifically approved by the General Counsel.
  - (3) All documents which obligate funds in excess of [redacted] will be approved by the Director of Central Intelligence.
  - (4) Appropriate documentation will be obtained from the Air Force and from competent technical advisers in support of procurement contracts and the specifications and descriptions of materiel to which they refer.
- d. That the Comptroller be authorized to expend funds in the manner and to the extent approved by the Approving Officer within the

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limitations as to quantity and procedure set forth above.

- e. That the recruitment and training of pilots, and all expenses incidental thereto up to the amount of [redacted] be authorized.
- f. That the Project Officer be authorized to arrange for the necessary gathering and formulation of intelligence requirements and the necessary mission planning, in cooperation with the Air Force as appropriate.
- g. That the Project Officer be directed to maintain the closest possible security over all phases of AQUATONE.

APPROVED:

Director of Central Intelligence

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